

Ramsey Milholland

by Booth Tarkington

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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CHAPTER I.—With his grandfather, small Ramsey Milholland was leading the "Decoration Day Parade" in the home town. The old gentleman, a veteran of the Civil war, endeavored to impress the youngster with the significance of the great conflict, and many years afterward the boy was to remember his words with startling vividness.

CHAPTER II.—In the schoolroom, a few years afterward, Ramsey was not distinguished for remarkable ability, though his two pronounced dislikes were arithmetic and "Recitations." In sharp contrast to Ramsey's backwardness was the precocity of little Dora Yocum, a young lady whom in his bitterness he designates "Teacher's Pet."

CHAPTER III.—In high school, where he and Dora are classmates, Ramsey continues to feel that the girl delights to manifest her superiority, and the vindictiveness he generates becomes alarming, culminating in the resolution, that some day he would "show" her.

CHAPTER IV.—The acquaintance ripens, Ramsey and Milia openly "keeping company," while the former's parents wonder. His mother indeed goes so far as to express some disapproval of his choice, even hinting that Dora Yocum would be a more suitable companion, a suggestion which the youth receives with horror.

CHAPTER V.—At this period our hero gets the thrill of his first kiss. Milia being a very willing partner in the act. Her flippancy over the matter disconcerts Ramsey immensely, but shortly afterward the girl departs for a visit to Chicago. She leaves an endearing message for Ramsey, which adds to his feeling of melancholy.

CHAPTER VI.—At a class picnic Ramsey, to his intense surprise, appears to attract the favorable attention of Miss Milia Rust, a young lady of about his own age and the acknowledged belle of the class. Milia has the misfortune to fall into a creek while talking with Ramsey, and that youth promptly plunges to her rescue. The water is only some three feet deep, but Milia's gratitude for his heroic act is embarrassing. He is in fact taken captive by the fair one, to his great consternation.

CHAPTER VII.—Shortly after Milia's departure, her friend, Sally Chase, informs Ramsey that his inamorata has been married to her cousin and is not coming back, so that little romance is ended. Within a few months Ramsey and his closest friend, Fred Mitchell, go to the state university, Ramsey's chief feeling being one of relief that he has got away from the detested Dora. To his horror he finds she is also a student at the university. Induced to join a debating society, Ramsey is chosen as Dora's opponent in a debate dealing with the matter of Germany's right to invade Belgium. Dora being assigned the negative side of the argument. Partly on account of his feelings toward Dora, and his natural nervousness, he makes a miserable showing and Dora carries off the honors. A brash youngster named Linski objects to the showing made by Ramsey and becomes personal in his remarks. The matter ends with Ramsey, in the university vernacular, giving Linski a "peach of a bunch on the nose."

CHAPTER VIII.—Dora appears to have made a decided hit with her fellow students, to Ramsey's supreme wonderment. A rumor of his "affair" with the little Milia spreads and he gets the reputation of a man of experience and a "woman hater."

CHAPTER IX.—The story comes to the spring of 1916 and the sinking of the Lusitania. The university is stirred to its depths. Faculty and "frat" societies alike wire the government offering their services in the war which they believe to be inevitable. Dora, holding the belief that all war is wrong, sees with horror the spirit of the students, which is an intense desire to call Germany to account. She seeks Ramsey and endeavors to impress him with her pacifist views.

CHAPTER X.—Miss Yocum's appeal somewhat disconcerts Ramsey, especially as the girl seems to place some real value on his opinions, and his feelings toward her are somewhat vague.

CHAPTER XI.—After the vacation period, Dora makes an impressive appearance before the debating society, denouncing every form of militarism as wrong. She is decidedly in the minority, but makes a brave fight to stem the tide of feeling which she perceives is sweeping the country toward war.

CHAPTER XII.—Not altogether to Dora's surprise, Ramsey and Fred continue to meet, though Ramsey insists their talk is academic and nothing else. The feeling that the United States must take part in the war grows in the university.

A moment later his color suddenly became fiery. "I don't mean—I mean—" he stammered. "It was walking, of course—I mean we did go out walking, but it wasn't walking like—like this." He concluded with a fit of coughing which seemed to rack him.

Dora threw back her head and laughed delightedly. "Don't you apologize," she said. "I didn't when I said it seemed to me that we were going walking so often, when in reality it's only four or five times altogether. I think I can explain, though: I think it came partly from a feeling I have that I can rely on you—that you're a good, solid, reliable sort of person. I remember from the time we were little children, you always had a sort of worried, honest look in school, and you used to make a dent in your forehead—you meant it for a frown—whenever I caught your eye. You hated me so honestly, and you were so honestly afraid I wouldn't see it!"

"Oh, yes—yes!" she laughed, then grew serious. "My feeling about you—that you were a person to be relied

on, I mean—I think it began that evening in our freshman year, after the Lusitania, when I stopped you on the campus and you went with me, and I couldn't help crying, and you were so nice and quiet. I hardly realized then that it was the first time we'd ever really talked together—of course I did all the talking!—and yet we'd known each other so many years. I thought of it afterward. But what gave me such a different view of you, I'd always thought you were one of that truculent sort of boys, always just bursting for a fight; but you showed me you'd really never had a fight in your life and hated fighting, and that you sympathized with my feeling about war." She stopped speaking to draw in her breath with a sharp sigh. "Ah, don't you remember what I've told you all along? How it keeps coming closer and closer—and now it's almost here! Isn't it unthinkable? And what can we do to stop it, we poor few who feel that we must stop it?"

"Well—" Ramsey began uncomfortably. "Of course I—I—"

"You can't do much," she said. "I know. None of us can. What can any little group do? There are so few of us among the undergraduates—and only one in the whole faculty. All the rest are for war. But we mustn't give up; we must never feel afterward that we left anything undone; we must fight to the last breath!"

"Fight?" he repeated wonderingly, then chuckled.

"Oh, as a figure of speech," she said impatiently. "Our language is full of barbaric figures left over from the dark ages. But, oh, Ramsey!"—she touched his sleeve—"I've heard that Fred Mitchell is saying that he's going to Canada after Easter, to try to get into the Canadian aviation corps. If it's true, he's a dangerous firebrand, I think. Is it true?"

"I guess so. He's been talking that way, some."

"But why do you let him talk that way?" she cried. "He's your roommate; surely you have more influence with him than anybody else has. Couldn't you—"

He shook his head slowly, while upon his face the faintly indicated modelings of a grin hinted of an inner laughter at some surreptitious thought. "Well, you know, Fred says himself sometimes, I don't seem to be much of a talker exactly!"

"I know. But don't you see? That sort of thing is contagious. Others will think they ought to go if he does; he's popular and quite a leader. Can't you do anything with him?"

She waited for him to answer. "Can't you?" she insisted.

The grin had disappeared and Ramsey grew red again.

He seemed to wish to speak, to heave with speech that declined to be spoken and would not rouse up from his inwards. Finally he uttered words.

"I—I—well, I—"

"Oh, I know," she said. "A man—or a boy!—always hates to be intruding his own convictions upon other men, especially in a case like this, where he might be afraid of some idiot's thinking him unmanly. But Ramsey—" Suddenly she broke off and looked at him attentively; his discomfort had become so obvious that suspicion struck her. She spoke sharply. "Ramsey, you aren't dreaming of doing such a thing, are you?"

"What such a thing?"

"Fred hasn't influenced you, has he? You aren't planning to go with him, are you?"

"Where?"

"To join the Canadian aviation."

"No; I hadn't thought of doing it."

She sighed again, relieved. "I had a queer feeling about you just then—that you were thinking of doing some such thing. You looked so odd—and you're always so quiet, anybody might not really know what to think. But I'm not wrong about you, am I, Ramsey?"

"I'm not wrong, am I, Ramsey?"

"About what?" he murmured, uncomfortably.

"You are my friend, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Then it's all right," she said. "That relieves me and makes me happier than I was just now, for of course if you're my friend you wouldn't let me make any mistake about you. I believe you, and now, just before I go in and we won't see much of each other for a week—if you still want me to go with you again next Sunday—"

"Yes—won't you, please?"

"Yes, if you like. But I want to tell you now that I count on you in all this, even though you don't 'talk much,' as you say; I count on you more than I do on anybody else, and I trust you

when you say you're my friend, and it makes me happy.

"And I think perhaps you're right about Fred Mitchell. Talk isn't everything, nobody knows that better than I, who talk so much! and I think that, instead of talking to Fred, a steady, quiet influence like yours would do more good than any amount of arguing. So I trust you, you see? And I'm sorry I had that queer doubt of you." She held out her hand. "Unless I happen to see you on the campus for a minute, in the meantime, it's good-bye until a week from today. So—well, so, good-bye until then!"

"Wait," said Ramsey.

"What is it?"

He made a great struggle. "I'm not influencing Fred not to go," he said. "I—don't want you to trust me to do anything like that."

"What?"

"I think it's all right for him to go, if he wants to," Ramsey said, miserably.

"You do? For him to go to fight?"

He swallowed. "Yes."

"Oh!" she cried, turned even redder than he, and ran up the stone steps. But before the stone doors closed upon her she looked down to where he stood, with his eyes still lowered, a lonely seeming figure, upon the pavement below. Her voice caught upon a sob as she spoke.

"If you feel like that, you might as well go and enlist, yourself," she said.



He Swallowed. "Yes."

bitterly. "I can't—I couldn't—speak to you again after this!"

CHAPTER XIV.

It was easy enough for him to evade Fred Mitchell's railings these days; the sprig's mood was truculent, not toward his roommate but toward congress, which was less in fiery haste than he to be definitely at war with Germany.

All through the university the change had come: athletics, in other years spotlighted at the center of the stage, languished suddenly, threatened with abandonment; students working for senior honors forgot them; everything was forgotten except that growing thunder in the soil.

Several weeks elapsed after Dora's bitter dismissal of Ramsey before she was mentioned between the comrades. Then, one evening, Fred asked, as he restlessly paced their study floor:

"Have you seen your pacifist friend lately?"

"No. Not exactly. Why?"

"Well, for my part, I think she ought to be locked up," Fred said, angrily.

"Have you heard what she did this afternoon?"

"No."

"It's all over college. She got up in the class in jurisprudence and made a speech. It's a big class, you know, over two hundred, under Dean Burney. He's a great lecturer, but he's a pacifist—the only one on the faculty—and a friend of Dora's. They say he encouraged her to make this break and led the subject around so she could do it, and then called on her for an opinion, as the highest-stand student in the class. She got up and claimed there wasn't any such thing as a legitimate cause for war, either legally or morally, and said it was a sign of weakness in a nation for it to believe that it did have a cause for war."

"Well, it was too much for that little, spunky Joe Stansbury, and he jumped up and argued with her. He made her admit all the Germans have done to us, the sea murders and the land murders, the blowing up of factories, the propaganda, the strikes, trying to turn the United States into a German settlement, trying to get Japan and Mexico to make war on us, and all the rest. He even made her admit there was proof they mean to conquer us when they get through with the others, and that they've set out to rule the world for their own benefit, and make whoever else they kindly allow to live, work for them."

"She said it might be true, but since nothing at all could be a right cause for war, then all this couldn't be a cause for war. Of course she had her regular pacifist 'logic' working; she said that since war is the worst thing there is, why, all other evils were lesser, and a lesser evil can't be a just cause for a greater. She got terribly excited, they say, but kept right on, anyway. She said war was murder and there couldn't be any other way to look at it; and she'd heard there was already talk in the university of students thinking about enlisting, and whoever did such a thing was virtual-

ly enlisting to return murder for murder. Then Joe Stansbury asked her if she meant that she'd feel toward any student that enlisted the way she would toward a murderer, and she said, yes, she'd have a horror of any student that enlisted."

"Well, that broke up the class; Joe turned from her to the platform and told old Burney that he was responsible for allowing such talk in his lecture room, and Joe said so far as he was concerned, he resigned from Burney's classes right there. That started it, and practically the whole class got up and walked out with Joe. They said Burney streaked off home, and Dora was left alone in there, with her head down on her desk—and I guess she certainly deserves it. A good many have already stopped speaking to her."

Ramsey fidgeted with a pen on the table by which he sat. "Well, I don't know," he said, slowly. "I don't know if they ought to do that exactly."

"Why oughtn't they?" Fred demanded, sharply.

"Well, it looks to me as if she was only fighting for her principles. She believes in 'em. The more it costs a person to stick to their principles, why, the more I believe the person must have something pretty fine about 'em likely."

"Yes!" said the hot-headed Fred. "That may be in ordinary times, but not when a person's principles are liable to betray their country! We won't stand that kind of principles, I tell you, and we oughtn't to. Dora Yocum's finding that out, all right. She had the biggest position of any girl in this place, or any boy either, up to the last few weeks, and there wasn't any student or hardly even a member of the faculty that had the influence or was more admired and looked up to. She had the whole show! But now, since she's just the same as called any student a murderer if he enlists to fight for his country and flag—well, now she hasn't got anything at all, and if she keeps on she'll have even less!"

He paused in his walking to and fro and came to a halt behind his friend's chair, looking down compassionately upon the back of Ramsey's motionless head. His tone changed. "I guess it isn't just the ticket—me to be talking this way to you, is it?" he said, with a trace of huskiness.

"Oh—it's all right," Ramsey murmured, not altering his position.

"I can't help blowing up," Fred went on. "I want to say, though, I know I'm not very considerate to blow up about her to you this way. I've been playing horse with you about her ever since freshman year, but—well, you must have understood, Ram, I never meant anything that would really bother you much, and I thought—well, I really thought it was a good thing, you—your—well, I mean about her, you know. I'm on, all right. I know it's pretty serious with you." He paused.

"It's—it's kind of tough luck!" his friend contrived to say; and he began to pace the floor again.

"Oh—well—" he said.

"See here, ole stick-in-the-mud," Fred broke out abruptly. "After her saying what she did—Well, it's none o' my business, but—but—"

"Well, what?" Ramsey murmured.

"I don't care what you say, if you want to say anything."

"Well, I got to say it," Fred half groaned and half blurted. "After she said that—and she meant it—why, if I were in your place I'd be darned if I'd be seen out walking with her again."

"I'm not going to be," Ramsey said, quietly.

"By George!" And now Fred halted in front of him, both being huskily solemn. "I think I understand a little of what that means to you, old Ramsey; I think I do. I think I know something of what it costs you to make that resolution for your country's sake." Impulsively he extended his hand. "It's a pretty big thing for you to do. Will you shake hands?"

But Ramsey shook his head. "I didn't do it. I wouldn't ever have done anything just on account of her talking that way. She shut the door on me—it was a good while ago."

"She did? What for?"

"Well, I'm not much of a talker, you know, Fred," said Ramsey, staring at the pen he played with. "I'm not much of anything, for that matter, probably, but I—well—I—"

"You what?"

"Well, I had to tell her I didn't feel about things the way she did. She'd thought I had, all along, I guess. Anyway, it made her hate me or something, I guess; and she called it all off. I expect there wasn't much to call off, so far as she was concerned, anyhow." He laughed feebly. "She told me I better go and enlist."

"Pleasant of her!" Fred muttered.

"Especially as we know what she thinks enlisting means." He raised his voice cheerfully. "Well, that's settled; and, thank God, old Mr. Bernstorff's on his way to his sweet little vine-clad cottage home! They're getting guns on the ships, and the big show's liable to commence any day. We can hold up our heads now, and we're going to see some great times, old Ramsey boy! It's hard on the home folks—Gosh! I don't like to think of that! And I guess it's going to be hard on a lot of boys that haven't understood what it's all about, and hard on some that their family affairs, and business, and so on, have got 'em tied up so it's hard to go—and of course there's plenty that just can't, and some that aren't husky enough—but the rest of us are going to have the big time in our lives. We got an awful lot to learn; it scares me to think of what I don't know about being any sort of a rear-rank private. Why, it's a regular profession, like practicing law, or selling for a drug house on the road."

"Only. Do you remember how we talked about that, 'way back in freshman year, what we were going to do when we got out of college? You were going to be practicing law, for instance, and I—well, for instance, remember Colburn; he was going to be a doctor, and he did go to some medical school for one year. Now he's in the Red Cross, somewhere in Persia. Golly!"

He paused, then chattered briskly on. "Well, there's one good old boy was with our class for a while, back in freshman year; I bet we won't see him in any good old army! Old rough-neck Linski that you put the knob on his nose for. Tommie Hopper says he saw him last summer in Chicago soap-boxin', yellin' his head off cussin' every government under the sun, but mostly ours and the allies', you bet, and going to run the earth by revolution and representatives of unskilled labor immigrants, nobody that can read or write allowed to vote, except Linski. Tommie Hopper says he knows all about Linski; he never did a day's work in his life—too busy trying to get the workmen stirred up against the people that exploit 'em! Tommie says he had a big crowd to hear him, though, and took up quite a little money for a 'cause or something. Well, let him holler! I guess we can attend to him when we get back from over yonder. By George, old Ram, I'm gettin' kind of floppy in the gills!" He administered a resounding slap to his comrade's shoulder. "It certainly looks as if our big days were walking toward us!"

He was right. The portentous days came on apace, and each one brought a new and greater portent. The faces of men lost a driven look besetting them in the days of badgered waiting, and instead of that heavy apprehension one saw the look men's faces must have worn in 1776 and 1861, and the history of the old days grew clearer in the new. The President went to the congress, and the true indictment he made there reached scoffing Potsdam with an unspoken prophecy somewhat chilling even to Potsdam, one guesses—and then through an April night went almost quietly the steady word: we were at war with Germany.

The bugles sounded across the continent; drums and fife played up and down the city streets and in town and village squares and through the countryside. Faintly in all ears there was a multitudinous noise like distant, hoarse cheering . . . and a sound like that was what Dora Yocum heard, one night, as she sat lonely in her room. The bugles and fife and drums had been heard about the streets of the college town, that day, and she thought she must die of them, they hurt her so, and now to be haunted by this imaginary cheering—

She started. Was it imaginary?

She went downstairs and stood upon the steps of the dormitory in the open air. No; the cheering was real and loud. It came from the direction of the railway station, and the night air surged and beat with it.

Below her stood the aged janitor of the building, listening. "What's the cheering for?" she asked, remembering grimly that the janitor was one of her acquaintances who had not yet stopped "speaking" to her. "What's the matter?"

"It's a good matter," the old man answered. "I guess there must be a



"It's a Good Matter," the Old Man Answered.

big crowd of 'em down there. One of our students enlisted today, and they're givin' him a send-off. Listen to 'em, how they do cheer. He's the first one to go."

She went back to her room, shivering, and spent the next day in bed with an aching head. She rose in the evening, however—a handbill had been slid under her door at five o'clock, calling a "Mass Meeting" of the university at eight, and she felt it her duty to go; but when she got to the great hall she found a seat in the dimmest corner, farthest from the rostrum.

The president of the university addressed the tumultuous many hundreds before him, for tumultuous they were until he quieted them. He talked to them soberly of patriotism, and called upon them for "deliberation and a little patience." There was danger of a stampede, he said, and he and the rest of the faculty were in a measure responsible to their fathers and mothers for them.

"You must keep your heads," he said. "God knows, I do not seek to judge your duty to this gravest mo-

ment of your lives, but . . . you what you must or must not do. But by hurrying into service now, without careful thought or consideration, you may impair the extent of your possible usefulness to the very cause you are so anxious to serve. Hundreds of you are taking technical courses which should be completed—at least to the end of the term in June. Instructors from the United States army are already on the way here, and military training will be begun at once for all who are physically eligible and of acceptable age. A special course will be given in preparation for flying, and those who wish to become aviators may enroll themselves for the course at once."

"I speak to you in a crisis of the university's life, as well as that of the nation, and the warning I utter has been made necessary by what took place yesterday and today. Yesterday morning, a student in the junior class enlisted as a private in the United States regular army. Far be it from me to deplore his course in so doing; he spoke to me about it, and in such a way that I felt I had no right to dissuade him. I told him that it would be preferable for college men to wait until they could go as officers, and, aside from the fact of a greater prestige, I urged that men of education could perhaps be more useful in that capacity. He replied that if he were useful enough as a private a commission might in time come his way, and, as I say, I did not feel at liberty to attempt dissuasion. He left to join a regiment to which he had been assigned, and many of you were at the station to bid him farewell."

"But enthusiasm may be too contagious; even a great and inspiring motive may work for harm, and the university must not become a desert. In the twenty-four hours since that young man went to join the army last night, one hundred and eleven of our young men students have left our walls; eighty-four of them went off together at three o'clock to catch an east-bound train at the junction and enlist for the navy at Newport. We are, I say, in danger of a stampede."

He spoke on, but Dora was not listening; she had become obsessed by an idea which seemed to be carrying her to the border of tragedy. When the crowd poured forth from the building she went with it mechanically, and paused in the dark outside. She spoke to a girl whom she did not know.

"I beg your pardon—"

"Yes?"

"I wanted to ask: Do you know who was the student Doctor Crovis spoke of? I mean the one that was the first to enlist, and that they were cheering last night when he went away to be a private in the United States army. Did you happen to hear his name?"

"Yes, he was a Junior."

"Who was it?"

"Ramsey Milholland."

CHAPTER XV.

Fred Mitchell, crossing the campus one morning, ten days later, saw Dora standing near the entrance of her dormitory, where he would pass her unless he altered his course; and as he drew nearer her and the details of her face grew into distinctness, he was indignant with himself for feeling less and less indignation toward her in proportion to the closeness of his approach. The pity that came over him was mingled with an unruly admiration, causing him to wonder what unpatriotic stuff she could be made of. She was marked, but not whipped; she still held herself straight under all the hammering and cutting which, to his knowledge, she had been getting.

She stopped him, "for only a moment," she said, adding with a wan prouddness: "That is, if you're not one of those who feel that I shouldn't be 'spotted' to?"

"No," said Fred, stiffly. "I may share their point of view, perhaps, but I don't feel called upon to obtrude it on you in that manner."

"I see," she said, nodding. "I've wanted to speak with you about Ramsey."

"All right."

She bit her lip, then asked, abruptly: "What made him do it?"

"Enlist as a private with the regulars?"

"No. What made him enlist at all?"

"Only because he's that sort," Fred returned briskly. "He may be inexplicable to people who believe that his going out to fight for his country is the same thing as going out to commit a murder."

She lifted her hand. "Couldn't you—"

(To be continued)

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